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THIRD PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. By paragraph 19 of resolution 1181 (1998) of 13 July 1998, the Security Council requested me to submit an initial report within 30 days of the adoption of the resolution and every 60 days thereafter on the deployment of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) and its progress in carrying out its mandate, and also to inform the Council on plans for the later phases of the deployment of UNOMSIL when security conditions permit these to be implemented. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request and describes developments since my second progress report on UNOMSIL (S/1998/960) of 16 October 1998. The present report is also submitted pursuant to paragraph 8 of resolution 1171 (1998) of 5 June 1998.

II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

2. Since my second progress report, the Government of Sierra Leone has continued its efforts to consolidate its position, to restore the stability of the country and to improve relations with its neighbours. The Government has launched initiatives to strengthen the civil service and to fight corruption. Sierra Leone is also increasingly active in the regional and international arena.

3. On 30 October 1998, the Government launched a nationwide consultative exercise, organized with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), aimed at enhancing the capacity of Government ministries, other national institutions and civil society to take charge of the development process. The consultations exercise is expected to conclude on 14 December with the adoption of a national consensus on major policy issues, including national reconciliation.

4. The Government has also pursued legal proceedings against both military and civilian supporters of the illegal coup of May 1997 by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). On 19 October 1998, after a court martial had sentenced 34 officers found guilty of treason to death, 24 of them were executed by firing squad. The executions took place despite appeals from the United

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Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and others, including myself, for a stay of execution and the grant of the right of appeal. On 23 October 1998, a jury at the High Court in Freetown found Corporal Foday Sankoh, the leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), guilty of treason and related offences and sentenced him to death by hanging. Corporal Sankoh, who had not been legally represented during his trial, has now selected legal advisers to undertake his appeal following efforts by the Government, with UNOMSIL assistance, to secure legal representation for him.

5. At their summit meeting in Abuja on 30 and 31 October 1998, the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) agreed to combine the strengthening of its Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) with efforts at dialogue to achieve lasting peace and national reconciliation in Sierra Leone. The Heads of State and Government also expressed gratitude to Ghana, Guinea and Nigeria for contributing troops to ECOMOG in Sierra Leone, encouraged Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Mali and Niger to deploy the troops they had promised to contribute as soon as possible and appealed to the international community to provide the necessary logistical support. The arrival of these additional troops is still being awaited.

6. On 7 December 1998, the Chairman of the Security Council Sanctions Committee and Permanent Representative of Sweden, Ambassador Hans Dahlgren, arrived in Freetown for a four-day assessment mission. Ambassador Dahlgren met with President Kabbah; the ECOMOG Force Commander, Major-General Timothy Shelpidi; the ECOMOG Task Force Commander, Brigadier-General Abu Ahmadu and others from the United Nations and the international community. During his visit to the front-line areas, the local authorities conveyed to Ambassador Dahlgren their requests for United Nations assistance in controlling the border with Liberia through the establishment of a buffer zone, the deployment of United Nations military observers and assistance to ECOMOG in patrolling the frontier. Ambassador Dahlgren also visited Monrovia.

7. Following his visit to the Gambia on 9 December, President Kabbah reportedly accepted an offer from the President of the Gambia to mediate a peace agreement with the rebels.

Follow-up to the Special Conference on Sierra Leone

8. As called for by the Special Conference on Sierra Leone held at United Nations Headquarters on 30 July 1998, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland convened a meeting of the International Contact Group of donors to Sierra Leone in London on 5 November. The objectives of the meeting were to build up international support for Sierra Leone's efforts to restore peace, democracy and human rights; to encourage further assistance to ECOMOG and contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Sierra Leone; to try to match specific ECOMOG requirements to donor offers; and to encourage the Government of Sierra Leone to develop political dialogue and national reconciliation beyond the programme for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants and to encourage participation in it.

9. The London meeting, which was opened by Mr. Tony Lloyd, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, was attended on behalf of the Government

of Sierra Leone by Mr. James Jonah, the Minister of Finance, Development and Economic Planning, the ECOWAS Executive Secretary, Mr. Lansana Kouyate, and my Special Representative for Sierra Leone, Mr. Francis G. Okelo. The meeting expressed strong support for the dual-track approach (military and diplomatic) agreed upon at the ECOWAS summit on 31 October, by which efforts to strengthen ECOMOG would be accompanied by the opening of dialogue to achieve lasting peace and national reconciliation.

10. The meeting agreed on a series of next steps to be taken by the Government of Sierra Leone, ECOWAS and ECOMOG and the international community. In particular, the Government would pursue the above-mentioned dual track approach for restoring peace and stability in Sierra Leone. Troop contributors would continue their efforts to augment ECOMOG, with the aim of completing the additional deployments by the end of 1998. For its part, the international community would press on with financing and other support to help ECOMOG remain in Sierra Leone and expand its operations, including through contributions to the Trust Fund to Support United Nations Peacekeeping-related Efforts in Sierra Leone, as well as bilateral contributions.

11. It has provisionally been decided that the next meeting of the International Contact Group will be held in New York in January 1999. In Sierra Leone, a Government working group chaired by the Minister of Finance is continuing to follow up on the commitments and pledges made by donors. The membership of the working group also includes UNOMSIL and donor representatives.

Relations between Sierra Leone and its neighbours

12. On 12 November 1998, at the invitation of President Lansana Conte of Guinea, President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone and President Charles Taylor of Liberia participated in an extraordinary summit meeting of the Mano River Union in Conakry. The summit was also attended by the Reverend Jesse Jackson, the Presidential Special Envoy for the Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights in Africa, as well as my Special Representative for Sierra Leone and my Representative for Liberia, Mr. Felix Downes-Thomas.

13. In a communiqué issued after the meeting, the three Heads of State announced their decision to rejuvenate the Mano River Union. They further pledged to ensure the strict observance of the 1986 Non-Aggression and Security Cooperation Agreement between Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea that had been signed and ratified by the three member States. The three Heads of State agreed to work collectively to restore peace in Sierra Leone and maintain stability in the subregion.

14. After the summit, in a meeting with President Kabbah in Freetown, Reverend Jackson stressed the advantage of negotiations over confrontation and called for a negotiated settlement to the conflict in Sierra Leone. A Liberian delegation, led by the Minister of National Security, concluded a two-day visit to Sierra Leone on 9 December. The Liberian Government subsequently announced that President Kabbah had agreed with President Taylor's request for cooperation on joint border patrols.

Activities of the Mission relating to the security situation

15. While reaffirming its commitment to end the ongoing rebel war as soon as possible, the Government has expressed its readiness to address any grievances the rebels might have on condition that they first stop fighting, lay down their arms and surrender to ECOMOG or UNOMSIL. There has also been discussion in Government circles of a possible offer to provide safe passage to five persons identified as leaders of the two factions comprising the rebel forces - Johnny Paul Koroma and S. A. J. Musa of the AFRC and Sam Bockarie, Dennis Mingo and Eldred Collins of the RUF - to leave the country for a non-neighbouring country of their choice.

16. In this context, UNOMSIL has cooperated closely with the Government and with ECOMOG in following up indications that S. A. J. Musa, along with several of his supporters, might be prepared to surrender to UNOMSIL. Despite suspicions that this reported offer might be a feint, UNOMSIL has made provisional preparations to accept the surrender of individuals or groups of rebels if this can be arranged under proper security conditions. UNOMSIL has also been in contact with S. A. J. Musa to try to secure the release of a Catholic priest, Father Mario Guerra, who was kidnapped near Makeni on 17 November 1998 by elements of the AFRC.

17. Since the establishment of UNOMSIL, my Special Representative has consulted the resident agencies, funds and programmes on a regular basis and has instituted weekly United Nations coordination meetings to address issues covered under the respective mandates of the organizations. Moreover, a joint security committee meets weekly to share and assess information about the situation on the ground. UNOMSIL has also actively pursued close contact with representatives of civil society, including good working relations with local non-governmental organizations and participation in civic events, such as symposia and workshops.

III. MILITARY AND SECURITY SITUATION

Rebel activities

18. On the basis of the information received by UNOMSIL on the strength, organization and activities of the rebels, there appear to be six rebel battalion-type formations comprising approximately 300 fighters each. Two of these are primarily AFRC and are based in the north. The other four, believed to be RUF with some AFRC elements, are deployed around Kailahun. It is believed that the AFRC units receive supplies of arms and ammunition from the Kailahun district.

19. In the north of the country, and especially in the north-west, rebel attacks against civilians have persisted and have recently intensified. In the first few days of December 1998, a large rebel force moving southwards and westwards launched coordinated and well-planned attacks on several locations near the road from Freetown to the Guinean border, including Mange, Lunsar and Masiaka, inflicting heavy casualties on civilians and property damage and causing thousands to flee and take refuge in the capital and surrounding

districts. This rebel force is believed to be under the command of S. A. J. Musa.

20. There is much speculation concerning the motive behind these attacks, which have taken place at a time when Musa has publicly offered to surrender to UNOMSIL. These atrocities are taking place against the background of a rift which appears to have arisen between the AFRC remnants in the north and the RUF in the east. ECOMOG and the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) have done much to disrupt the supply of arms and ammunition from Kailahun to the rebels in the north.

21. In the north-east, the rebel capacity to concentrate and coordinate their forces appears to have eroded since the time of their attack on Kabala in July. The rebel concentration in Koinadugu area was broken up by combined efforts of reconstituted battalions of former soldiers of the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF) and ECOMOG, thus reducing the threat to Makeni and to the Koidu-Lunsar road. Repeated rebel attempts to gain control of the diamond-rich Koidu area have been unsuccessful. However, the situation remains unpredictable and the area is still in danger from rebel attacks.

22. In the south-east, rebel attacks during October and November 1998 seemed designed to surround and cut off Kenema both from Freetown and from the Liberian border by controlling the road that links Daru with Joru and Zimmi. UNOMSIL, in close collaboration with ECOMOG and CDF units based at Kenema, is standing by in case the rebels' failure to achieve their objective should lead some of them to open talks with the Government.

23. The south and south-west of the country, including Freetown, have remained calm, though tension in the capital rose during December following a rebel attack on the road linking Masiaka and Rogberi.

Civil Defence Forces/ECOMOG/RSLMF

24. In the north, ECOMOG has shown increased willingness to engage the rebels in the bush, while the CDF, which essentially originated in southern Sierra Leone, has begun to operate in the north. These developments, as well as the reinduction of former RSLMF soldiers into combat alongside ECOMOG, appear to have taken a toll on rebel strength in the north-east. As noted above, an important objective of the pro-Government forces has been to disrupt ammunition supply lines between the main rebel stronghold in the Kailahun district and rebel units in the north of the country. In the south-east, the CEF, with ECOMOG support, has now established fairly effective control of the area south of Kenema after stemming the rebel offensive along the Daru-Joru-Zimmi road.

25. The CDF in both the north and the east has, however, been hampered by serious shortages of ammunition, communications, food, transportation and medicines. In addition to logistical shortages, there have been occasional lapses in coordination between ECOMOG and the CDF. Air strikes launched by ECOMOG to disperse rebel preparations for an attack on Joru on 15 November reportedly caused casualties among a CDF concentration nearby, underlining the need for improved coordination between the two forces.

26. Despite efforts to organize and fund the deployment of reinforcements, ECOMOG also remains overstretched in terms of manpower and requires urgent logistical support. Nevertheless, there are indications that ECOMOG has been concentrating its resources to support operations into Kailahun district, apparently in preparation for more intensive activity now that the rainy season has ended. The Government continues to be fully committed to concluding the war as soon as possible.

Deployment of the Mission

27. Since my second progress report, UNOMSIL's military deployment has remained unchanged, with 40 observers, in addition to the Chief Military Observer, General Subhash C. Joshi (India), and the medical team of 15 personnel (see annex). The observers based at Lungi, Hastings, Makeni, Bo and Kenema have continued to maintain close liaison with local government authorities, ECOMOG and the CDF, to gather information through contacts and regular patrols, and to keep my Special Representative fully informed of developments. The UNOMSIL observers also give advice on humanitarian law in the field, provide security advice to other United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and other humanitarian agencies and assist them in their liaison with ECOMOG and the CDF as necessary.

28. In view of S. A. J. Musa's reported offer to surrender and the prospect of ECOMOG's increased activity in the east, UNOMSIL, notwithstanding the continued volatility of the situation in the north, has prepared contingency plans to deploy teams in Kabala, Kambia, Koidu and Kailahun in order to be able to respond rapidly to any willingness on the part of the rebels to surrender. The presence of UNOMSIL observers in these tense areas, to encourage and facilitate humanitarian activities and to monitor the human rights situation, would also be important. Thus, additional observers may have to be deployed expeditiously when conditions permit, within the limits authorized by the Security Council in resolution 1181 (1998).

29. In addition to making regular visits to the military observers' team sites, some members of the medical team, over and above their normal duties, have also undertaken honorary teaching assignments in the local medical college and have offered advice to local hospitals and clinics, especially those treating amputees. These contacts and services are clearly appreciated by the general public.

Creation of a new Sierra Leonean army

30. The Government of Sierra Leone is continuing to develop its plans to rebuild the armed forces under civilian management and the overall democratic control of the Government. Since October 1998, two visits to Sierra Leone have been undertaken by a British joint security sector mission to assess the Government's plans for the creation and training of new armed forces and to produce an assessment of the prospects for assistance from the United Kingdom. The Government has also requested UNOMSIL's assistance in this process, while the Chief of Defence Staff, Brigadier-General Maxwell Khobe, is currently engaged in a sensitization tour of the country to prepare for new recruitment.

IV. DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION

31. The first phase of the Government's programme for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, as described in my last report, was to cover the demobilization of former RSLMF and RUF personnel who were captured and disarmed by ECOMOG and later encamped at Lungi. The total number of ex-combatants so far registered at Lungi is 2,973. Pre-discharge orientation activities have been held since October, but the actual reintegration process, including such programmes as vocacional training, will commence as and when the funding contributed for these purposes has been made available.

32. Following the registration of 52 children at Makeni, another group of 33 child ex-combatants, mainly from the RUF, were registered at Lakka near Freetown on 21 November 1998. A further group of 94 children, mainly from the RUF, were registered at Bo on 3 December. There are also some 70 RUF and CDF child ex-combatants to be registered at Port Loko as soon as the security situation improves. Once the registration is completed, social services will take over the reintegration of the children into society. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is closely involved with this exercise to ensure the proper treatment of the children during demobilization and reintegration.

33. Following commitments made to my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, during his visit to Sierra Leone in May 1998, the Executive Committee of the National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration has agreed to ensure that the CDF do not initiate persons under the age of 18 and that they cooperate with the registration of children already within their ranks. They also agreed to request that ECOMOG release children in detention to UNICEF, UNOMSIL or the Ministry of Social Welfare.

34. A national sensitization programme on this subject has also been under way since early October with full radio and television coverage and a nationwide arts competition on the theme "Join Hands for Peace". The Lungi ex-combatants have embarked on community welfare work in the area, which has been well received by the local community. This, together with the programme of pre-discharge orientation, has gone a long way towards facilitating the acceptance of the ex-combatants in the Lungi area.

35. The National Committee, chaired by President Kabbah, is continuing its activities and its secretariat is functioning well. The Committee has now also identified two additional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration sites at Magburaka and Gerihun and preparations for their opening are under way. However, the pace of the programme continues to lag behind the original goals since the intensity of the war effort has not yet subsided. A further 830 ex-RSLMF soldiers are being prepared for re-induction into combat as a fifth battalion fighting alongside ECOMOG. As with the other four battalions re-inducted from among the ex-RSLMF personnel at Lungi, it is understood that most of these soldiers will undergo the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process once the war has been concluded. There has been no progress in the demobilization of CDF fighters in safe areas. Apart from the registration of CDF personnel in a few localities, there are no indications yet

that the CDF are ready to begin the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, since they are still fighting.

V. HUMAN RIGHTS

Conflict-related human rights abuses and violations

36. Widespread rebel attacks on civilian populations have characterized the period since my last report. Attacks and forms of abuse of civilians exhibited a characteristic modus operandi: amputation of limbs, mutilation, actual or attempted decapitation, rape, burning alive of men, women and children, destruction of homes, abduction and looting. In one typical incident, at the end of October, five farmers were burned alive by rebels in a house some ten miles from the town of Alikalia, in the north-east. In early November, the entire northern township of Bafodia was destroyed. At the end of November, the northern town of Yifin was again devastated in a rebel attack, during which up to 50 youths were abducted.

37. During September and October 1998, the incidence of hospital admissions for amputations and mutilations reached levels similar to those during May and June, with 71 admissions in just two hospitals in the west of the country and an unverifiable number in other regions. It is likely that the hospital admission figures are much lower than the actual levels of civilian fatality and injury. During November, although the overall number of atrocities reportedly fell, there was an escalating rate of reports of actual and attempted decapitation. Particularly since late October, rebel elements have indicated that attacks were motivated by a desire for revenge against the sentencing to death of Corporal Foday Sankoh.

38. Since my last report, there have been further complaints regarding the behaviour of certain CDF contingents. One incident, investigated and confirmed by UNOMSIL, involved the killing by the CDF of four captured alleged rebels at Romeni, near Port Loko. UNOMSIL has indicated to the Government of Sierra Leone its willingness to assist in the training of key CDF personnel regarding provisions of human rights and humanitarian law applicable to their activities. There have also been reports of inappropriate behaviour by certain elements of ECOMOG, including unlawful detention. My Special Representative has taken this matter up with the Force Commander of the Monitoring Group.

39. Since my last report, there have been frequent reports of children being sent into combat environments, notwithstanding indications of some ECOMOG commanders refusing to allow under-age CDF combatants to serve under them. However, on 25 November, the Government reiterated its commitment to non-recruitment and demobilization of combatants aged under 18.

Treason trials

40. In the absence of an appeals process under court martial proceedings, most of the 34 military personnel sentenced to death in the first court martial sought recourse through petitioning the United Nations Human Rights Committee pursuant to the provisions of the Optional Protocol to the International

Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Despite the Committee's formal request for a stay of execution pending its consideration of the petitions, 24 officers were executed by firing squad on 19 October 1998. On 4 November, the Human Rights Committee adopted a strongly worded decision and requested the submission of a report by Sierra Leone pursuant to the provisions of article 40 of the International Covenant. At the request of the Committee, I brought its decision to the attention of President Kabbah in a letter to him dated 16 November 1998. In the same letter, I appealed to President Kabbah to give every consideration, once the appeals process had been exhausted, to extending mercy to those who had been condemned to death.

41. Two separate group treason trials ended, on 21 October and 5 November 1998, respectively, with the sentencing to death of a further 26 civilians, with right of appeal. Among those given prison sentences was a former Head of State of Sierra Leone, Joseph Momoh. All of those convicted have appealed their sentences.

Technical cooperation

42. UNOMSIL continues, within the limits of its resources, to advise and assist the Government and civil society in matters relating to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. This includes advising the Government on how to meet its reporting obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. For instance, UNOMSIL has facilitated the donation to the Government of law books for use by the legal profession and has hosted a seminar on judicial reporting for the Sierra Leone media. The human rights component has also provided other forms of advice to the United Nations community in Sierra Leone.

43. Human rights technical assistance and training support continues to be extended to the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights, the Sierra Leone police force and civil society, including the community of non-governmental organizations, as well as UNOMSIL military observers. During November 1998, UNOMSIL facilitated the most ambitious human rights monitoring and reporting skills training programme ever implemented in Sierra Leone, with 70 participants from all parts of the country. The trainees will now replicate the training nationwide. Other training activities since my last report include facilitation of the project of human rights training for religious leaders, primarily implemented by the World Conference for Religion and Peace and partially funded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

44. In order to offer a broad range of human rights related services, UNOMSIL has sought funding under the 1999 consolidated humanitarian appeal for Sierra Leone for four human rights projects: to enhance monitoring capacity regarding rebel activities, to provide enhanced human rights training for the police and for the humanitarian community and to further strengthen the capacity of civil society to monitor human rights. Other project proposals, in course of completion in close consultation with the Government and other stakeholders, address the human rights training and resources needs of the judiciary, legal profession and prison personnel.

45. On 24 November 1998, the Government of Sierra Leone reaffirmed its regulations on the manner in which the media may report on conflict-related issues. The regulations are based on the provisions of the state of emergency instituted in March 1998, elements of which may not be in compliance with applicable provisions of international human rights law. On 9 December, the Government arrested three journalists on charges related to these regulations. UNOMSIL is monitoring the situation.

VI. CIVILIAN POLICE

46. UNOMSIL has now deployed its full complement of five civilian police advisers and they are working closely with advisers deployed by the Commonwealth and with the Government of Sierra Leone and the police force in the reform and restructuring process.

47. Policing suffered a major setback during and immediately after the junta period. Many police officers had collaborated with the junta and others were killed or forced to flee, leaving much of the country without a police service. Following the reinstatement of the Government, the poor relationship between the police and public obliged the Government to undertake a comprehensive restructuring of the police force. Although policing activities have now returned to normal, many police stations are still not functional and will have to be rebuilt. Policing has not been reintroduced in certain areas of the country owing to rebel activity and/or the shortage of funds to reconstruct buildings. The CDF has established its own police force in some of the areas under its control, which operates independently of the Sierra Leonean police force.

48. The reintroduction of policing throughout the country also requires the retraining of police officers, a process hampered by a shortage of funds. The provision of minimal financial assistance would allow the introduction of limited training programmes. Towards this end, UNOMSIL civilian police have assisted in the development of a decentralized training programme, the production of training manuals and the conduct of refresher training.

49. After the introduction of the Government Policy Statement, the Police Mission Statement and the Strategic Development Plan (1998-2001), the civilian police advisers, in collaboration with the Commonwealth, have held detailed discussions with the Sierra Leonean police force on the restructuring process, the importance of respect for human rights, the role of the police in a democratic society and the disciplinary code of conduct. After consultations with all concerned, and with the financial support of the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, pilot projects have been introduced in certain police areas to improve communications and equipment and to introduce effective and efficient policing based on local needs and community involvement.

50. As part of the effort to improve the effectiveness of the Sierra Leonean police force, restructuring has begun in the departments of human resources management, personnel development, financial and logistical accountability, operations and crime management, with the aim of streamlining and restructuring

the departments and ensuring that police officers are carefully selected, properly trained, directed by highly motivated officers and financially and logistically supported so as to be able to render acceptable service.

VII. HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

51. Since my second progress report, humanitarian agencies have managed to maintain the delivery of relief assistance to populations fleeing insecurity in the north and east of the country. Most of the displaced are concentrated in a string of settlements between Makeni and Koidu in the centre of the country, in Kenema in the east and in Freetown. Fighting in the east has limited access to populations around Kenema, while hostilities in the north-west near the end of the reporting period have curtailed access there, as well as road access to Makeni. Growing insecurity along the arterial road network bodes ill for continued access and the delivery of assistance.

52. Displacement of civilian populations continued during the period under review. By mid-November, the United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit estimated that 308,695 persons had been displaced since February 1998, an increase of 58,000 internally displaced persons since my last report. The hostilities, which have continued since mid-November, have driven approximately 6,000 additional persons from their homes. As fighting continues into the dry season, the optimum period for military operations, the humanitarian community is concerned that access will continue to be constrained while displacement increases.

53. In an effort to further ensure the impartiality of relief operations and advocate for access, the Sierra Leonean humanitarian community came together at a workshop held from 19 to 23 November that resulted in a revised code of conduct for humanitarian agencies. The UNOMSIL human rights component also participated in the elaboration of the revised code, which is designed to reinforce a self-regulatory and coordinated approach for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and to ensure that the parties to the conflict recognize and observe the impartiality and inviolability of humanitarian principles.

54. Despite the prevailing hostile environment and logistical constraints, the humanitarian community has been able to avert potential humanitarian disasters through the provision of a wide range of relief programmes to the most affected war victims in Masingbi, Kambia, Kenema and Freetown.

55. A good harvest is expected in most secure areas as a result of the distribution of agricultural support packages to vulnerable farmers. Discussions are taking place in all agencies with respect to their 1999 food aid programmes, which are expected to equal the 1998 levels.

56. The delay in the issuance of transport clearances to food aid agencies by ECOMOG continues to constrain the movement of humanitarian food aid to vulnerable groups. There has also been an increase in harassment, abuse and intimidation of aid workers at some security checkpoints. Instances of ECOMOG personnel commandeering aid vehicles, including a World Food Programme (WFP) truck at Masingbi, have been raised with ECOMOG by UNOMSIL. Interventions

relating to a similar situation at the port in Freetown have led to significant improvements. Ms. Catherine Bertini, the Executive Director of WFP, will visit Sierra Leone from 10 to 12 December 1998 to assess food security issues in the country and the requirements for WFP assistance.

57. UNICEF undertook mass immunization campaigns in Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Makeni, Kambia, Port Loko and Kabala, covering an estimated 1.1 million people, about 25 per cent of Sierra Leone's population. UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are supporting the Ministry of Health and Sanitation in trying to reduce the maternal mortality rate, which currently averages 1,800 per 100,000 live births. A UNFPA consultant is in the country to examine various aspects of UNFPA's planned activities and issues of coordination between the relevant United Nations agencies and the Ministry of Health.

58. A World Health Organization (WHO) consultant has been working with the Ministry of Health to address future outbreaks of cholera. WHO has also provided drugs and supplies intended to further strengthen the Ministry's preparedness to cope with public health challenges. As a result, the cholera outbreak referred to in paragraph 41 of my last report is now under control. No deaths have been recorded since mid-October.

59. On 14 November 1998, President Kabbah launched activities for the forthcoming National Immunization Days, which will target polio. WHO and UNICEF, along with other agencies, are providing financial and technical support to the polio eradication drive. The first round of immunizations will take place on 19 December and the second round on 2 February. WHO has also taken steps to deal with outbreaks of meningitis.

60. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has continued to facilitate the repatriation of students and professional civil servants to Sierra Leone. During October and November, UNHCR repatriated about 1,660 Sierra Leoneans from Guinea. In close consultation with the Government and others, UNHCR is continuing to develop a reintegration strategy for returnees and internally displaced persons.

61. United Nations agencies, in consultation with the Government, national and international non-governmental organizations and donors, have completed the 1999 consolidated inter-agency appeal for Sierra Leone in the amount of $28 million. The 29 projects in the appeal range from immediate life-saving needs to longer-term projects aimed at creating a favourable environment for the promotion of peace and sustainable socio-economic development. The appeal was released in Geneva on 3 December by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and will be launched on 17 December 1998.

VIII. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

62. On 23 November 1998, the European Union signed an agreement with the Government of Sierra Leone to provide 111.5 million European currency units ($124.88 million) to help rebuild its economy. The funds, to be disbursed over five years, are to support rehabilitation of infrastructure, the development of social and public sectors and good governance. The aid will include eight

million European currency units ($8.92 million) in risk capital, provided by the European Investment Bank, for projects in power supply, mining and private sector investment.

63. On 27 November, the Government presented the budget and statement of policies for the financial year 1999 to Parliament. The budget, which is being debated by Parliament, focuses on continuing the process of rehabilitating basic infrastructure and rebuilding dislocated institutions, as well as pursuing stabilization and economic reform policies.

64. The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund has approved the Government's request for assistance under the post-conflict emergency assistance policy for Sierra Leone in the amount of approximately $15 million.

65. According to Government data, there are encouraging signs of a steady recovery in economic output. This is reflected in the 0.7 per cent growth rate in the gross domestic product in real terms, compared to negative 22 per cent for the same period last year. Increased activity in the manufacturing, services and construction sectors reflect the return of consumer and investor confidence. On the other hand, output in mining and agriculture continues to be depressed owing to persistent insecurity, especially in the east and north.

66. The generally weak economy has contributed to the continued pressure on the exchange rate. Gross external reserves have dwindled to 1.8 months of imports in 1998 compared to 5.7 months in the corresponding period for 1997. Consequently, the exchange rate, which had strengthened from 2,340 leones to the dollar in January 1998 to about 1,630 in March, depreciated to 1,850 leones in January 1998 to about 1,630 in March, depreciated to 1,850 leones in November. It is anticipated that increased donor support, particularly balance-of-payments assistance from the international financial institutions, the European Union and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, will reduce the pressure on the exchange rate. The Government's economic management policies have helped contain inflation and restore confidence in the private sector, bringing about the present decline in the inflation rate to 12.5 per cent as at December 1998.

IX. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

67. The General Assembly, by its resolution 53/29 of 20 November 1998, appropriated an amount of $22 million gross for the establishment and operation of the Observer Mission for the period of 13 July 1998 to 30 June 1999. This amount includes $9.1 million gross for the period from 14 January to 30 June 1999, equivalent to some $1.6 million gross per month, subject to the decision of the Security Council to extend the mandate of the Observer Mission beyond 13 January 1999.

68. Should the Council decide to extend the mandate of the Observer Mission as recommended in paragraph 76 below, it is anticipated that the estimated additional requirements of some $0.6 million gross arising during the 1998-1999 financial period in connection with the modest expansion of civilian staff of UNOMSIL recommended in paragraphs 78 and 79 below, would be met from resources already provided by the General Assembly.

69. As at 30 November 1998, the total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations amounted to $1,642.2 million.

70. Pursuant to the Council's Presidential statement of 26 February 1998 (S/PRST/1998/5), on 26 March 1998 I established the Trust Fund to Support United Nations Peacekeeping-related Efforts in Sierra Leone. As at 11 December 1998, voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund totalled $1.79 million from the Governments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland ($0.83 million) and Japan ($0.96 million). In addition, the government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has pledged to the Fund an amount of $1 million.

X. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

71. Despite the progress made by the Government in consolidating its authority, I am disturbed at the continuing attacks inflicted by the rebels on civilians in the north and the atrocities and abductions that accompany such attacks. I condemn these serious violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law and call again on the RUF and the AFRC to desist from attacks against their unarmed compatriots and to lay down their arms and surrender.

72. The elaboration of a dual-track approach to the resolution of the conflict following the ECOWAS summit of 31 October 1998 and the London meeting of the International Contact Group of 5 November is a welcome development, and UNOMSIL will work with the Government to pursue this approach. ECOMOG, the CDF and the re-inducted Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces personnel have done much to defend the Government and people of Sierra Leone against rebel attacks and should continue to do so. At the same time, I call on the Government to explore ways to encourage the rebels to lay down their arms and surrender in order to avoid more bloodshed.

73. Clear evidence has emerged during the national consultative process described in paragraph 4 above to demonstrate that the people of Sierra Leone are willing to reconcile themselves with the rebels, on condition that they accept the authority of the Government, lay down their arms and surrender. UNOMSIL will continue to offer its services to the Government in facilitating such surrenders, provided this can be done under acceptable security conditions. UNOMSIL is also prepared to work with the Government concerning assurances that those who surrender will be humanely treated, in accordance with internationally accepted standards, and that any rebels who face criminal prosecution for their acts receive a fair trial.

74. I am particularly encouraged by the outcome of the extraordinary summit meeting of the Mano River Union on 12 November 1998, at which President Kabbah, President Taylor and President Conte agreed to continue to strengthen the Union and improve their mutual relations. The importance of this subregional approach to the strengthening of stability and security in all three countries cannot be overemphasized. I look forward to further steps by all three Governments to prevent the use of their territory by armed groups who would seek to undermine stability and would use their territory for the illegal transit of weapons and ammunition, especially where this is in violation of United Nations resolutions. I am prepared to assist, through my Special Representative in Sierra Leone and

my Representative in Liberia, in developing and implementing a viable strategy for a subregional approach.

75. The onset of the dry season in Sierra Leone has opened the way for more effective action by ECOMOG, the CDF and the re-inducted personnel of the RSLMF. In order to maintain the pressure they have exerted to split the rebel forces, the military forces assisting the Government need to continue to receive adequate logistical support. In this context, I would like to express my appreciation to those Governments that have already made contributions to the Trust Fund to Support United Nations Peacekeeping-related Efforts in Sierra Leone and to encourage others to make similar contributions or to consider providing the necessary assistance bilaterally to ECOMOG or to individual ECOWAS countries.

76. UNOMSIL has proved its value to the Government and people of Sierra Leone as they pursue their recovery from the illegal seizure of power by the military junta, in May 1997, and all its nefarious consequences. In particular, the deployment in the countryside of United Nations military observers has demonstrated to the Government and people of Sierra Leone the commitment of the broader international community to the restoration of order and peace in the country under the legitimate Government. UNOMSIL has also provided crucial support for humanitarian operations in the countryside. I therefore recommend to the Security Council that the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone be extended for a further period of six months, until 13 July 1999.

77. The uncertain security situation in parts of the country and the delays to which the government's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme have consequently been subjected make it premature at this stage to proceed with further deployments of United Nations military observers, as authorized by resolution 1181 (1998). However, in view of the prospect that rebel fighters might begin surrendering as a result of the military operations directed against them in the east and the north, and the Government's willingness to accept their surrender under the conditions outlined above, UNOMSIL will continue to stand ready to deploy the additional observers rapidly as and when they may be required. I will keep the Security Council fully apprised of any developments in this regard and of any action I decide to take in response.

78. However, in order to address the growing demands on the ground and to be able to assist the Government and people of Sierra Leone in their efforts to normalize the situation, I am planning a modest expansion of the civilian staff of UNOMSIL. In particular, the enormity of the human rights abuses the rebels have perpetrated on the people of Sierra Leone and the large scope of human rights tasks to be performed have underlined the need for a strong human rights component. The deployment of five additional human rights officers in the provinces, in addition to the five now operating in the country, would do much to assist the Government to maintain and improve its commitment to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Sierra Leone. I also urge Member States to consider contributing bilaterally to UNOMSIL's human rights activities in Sierra Leone.

79. UNOMSIL could also help the government develop more fully a dialogue with the rebels in keeping with the dual-track approach. To this end, I intend to deploy three additional public information officers to develop radio programmes and other information activities aimed at reaching out to rebels in the countryside to persuade them to surrender and generally to pursue the goal of national reconciliation. The additional public information staff could also help to explain the role of UNOMSIL and the international community. At the same time, the addition of another political officer in the Office of my Special Representative would assist him to coordinate these activities.

80. The restoration of stability in Sierra Leone will be a long and arduous process and will continue to require military support as well as various other forms of assistance. In particular, the Government needs assistance in its efforts to establish a new professional armed force under civilian control, as well as an effective and well-motivated police force. The commitment of all Sierra Leoneans to achieving peace through dialogue and national reconciliation will also be essential. The United Nations, through UNOMSIL, is ready to play its part in that process.

81. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to my Special Representative, Mr. Francis G. Okelo, the Chief Military Observer, Brigadier-General Subhash C. Joshi, and all the military and civilian personnel of UNOMSIL. My thanks also go to the Government of Sierra Leone and to ECOMOG, as well as to Sierra Leonean civil society, for their continuing cooperation with the United Nations.

Annex

United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone: contributions as at 10 December 1998

	Military observers	Others[a]	Total
China	3		3
Egypt	2		2
India	6	15	21
Kenya	4		4
Kyrgyzstan	1		1
New Zealand	2		2
Pakistan	5		5
Russian Federation	7		7
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	7		7
Zambia	4		4
Total	41[b]	15	56

[a] Medical team.

[b] Including Chief Military Observer.

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